

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of the subject application are respectfully requested. Upon entry of this Amendment, claims 1-2, 7-26, and 28-30 remain pending, claims 1, 2, 9-18, and 23-26 having been withdrawn from consideration. In this Reply, Applicants have amended claims 7, 19, and 28-30 and have canceled claims 6 and 27 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Personal Interview

Initially, Applicants wish to express their appreciation for the opportunity granted their representative to conduct a personal interview on October 2, 2003. During the course of the interview, Applicants' representative discussed the claimed invention, particularly as it relates to independent claims 6, 7, 27, and 28, and distinctions over the applied prior art (i.e., *Shimoda*, U.S. Patent 5,440,345). Ultimately, the Examiner suggested that the claims be amended to incorporate other elements of the elected embodiment (illustrated, e.g., in Fig. 17) in order to overcome the prior art of record.

In this Reply, Applicants have amended independent claims 7 and 28 in a manner which is believed to be entirely consistent with the Examiner's suggestions. More particularly, Applicants have amended claim 7 to incorporate features of independent claim 6 and have amended independent claim 28 to incorporate features of

independent claim 27. Applicants respectfully submit that, at least in view of these amendments, the inventions of claims 7 and 28 clearly define over the applied prior art.

Prior Art Rejection

Claims 6-8, 19-22, and 27-30 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as allegedly being anticipated by *Shimoda* (U.S. Patent 5,440,345). This rejection, insofar as it pertains to the presently pending claims, is respectfully traversed.

As discussed above, Applicants have amended independent claims 7 and 28 in a manner which is believed to be entirely consistent with the Examiner's suggestions for overcoming the applied prior art. At least for this reason, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the Examiner's rejection of these claims under 35 U.S.C. § 102. Furthermore, even before such amendments, Applicants respectfully submit that *Shimoda* fails to anticipate any considered claim at least based on reasons set forth in the Reply dated July 23, 2003, such reasons being incorporated herein by reference for the sake of conciseness.

Conclusion

Applicants respectfully request entry of the amendments presented herein. These amendments are not believed to raise new issues that would require further search and consideration, and

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instead are believed to be consistent with the Examiner's suggestions for defining over the applied prior art.

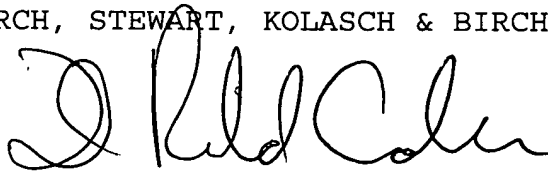
Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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